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PIONEER

Commemorating the 140th Anniversary
of the **SALT LAKE TABERNACLE**



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PIONEER

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The mission of the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers is to preserve the memory and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory. We honor the pioneers for their faith in God, devotion to family, loyalty to church and country, hard work and service to others, courage in adversity, personal integrity, and unyielding determination.

The society also honors present-day pioneers worldwide in many walks of life who exemplify these same qualities of character. It is further intended to teach these same qualities to the youth who will be tomorrow's pioneers.

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RESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Jay M. Smith

What an exciting issue this is. The Salt Lake Tabernacle, just like the adjacent Salt Lake Temple, is a landmark that is recognizable worldwide. Mention Salt Lake City to someone outside of Utah, and one of the first topics that comes up is Temple Square, the Tabernacle Choir, or the LDS Church. My first eight years were spent in Colorado, with frequent trips to Utah. Seldom did we come that some time wasn't spent at Temple Square. My teenage years were spent in Salt Lake, and I still recall many concerts, conferences, and meetings held in the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle Tour. The Sons of Utah Pioneers historical theme for 2007 is the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Besides this beautiful Tabernacle issue of the *Pioneer* magazine, the 2007 SUP medallion recognizes the Tabernacle's 140-year history with a beautiful imprint of the Tabernacle when the trees were yet young (1870s). In early April, shortly after the rededication of the Tabernacle, I had the opportunity, along with Booth Maycock, the NSSUP 2007 President-elect, to meet with the Tabernacle Choir president, Mac Christensen in the new Tabernacle offices. Three beautiful silver medallions were presented to Mr. Christensen for himself and the two choir conductors. On November 10, 2007, this year's NSSUP Historical Symposium will feature the Salt Lake Tabernacle, its architecture, its history, and its role as the home of the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra on Temple Square. We look forward to participation by the choir leaders in the evening banquet.

As Booth and I toured the offices and dressing rooms of the reconstructed building and viewed the freshly refurbished benches and upgraded video and sound facilities, we were again impressed with what a historical treasure we have in this building. We are grateful for the vision and foresight of Church leaders that have now strengthened and brightened this building for the years ahead.

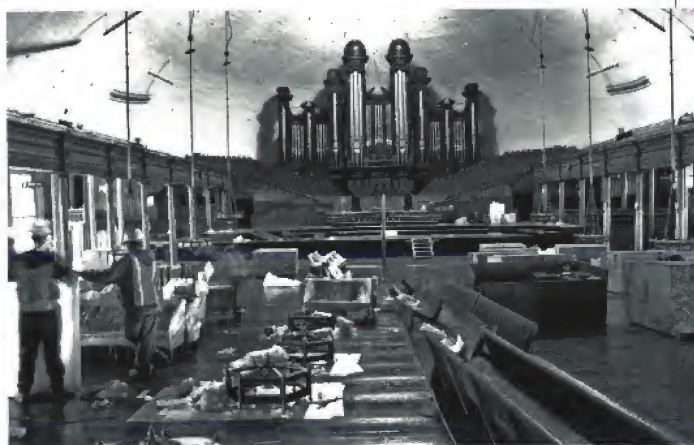
New Chapters. The Sons of Utah Pioneers operates through geographical chapters. During the last four months, several new chapters have been organized in Roosevelt, Draper, and Utah County, Utah, and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Many members live in areas that do not as yet have a chapter. We invite those of you in these areas to assist us in expanding our chapter numbers. The objectives of the chapters are to help the NSSUP reach its goals of preserving our pioneer heritage, honoring modern pioneers, and passing on to our children and grandchildren the values of the pioneers. Spouses of members play an essential role in our chapters as they participate in most of the meetings, treks, and other activities with their husbands. If you would like to know more about joining a chapter or starting a new one, I invite you to contact our headquarters office, 3301 E. 2920 So., Salt Lake City, Utah, toll free 1-888-827-2746. We also invite you to visit our website at

www.sonsofuthapioneers.org.

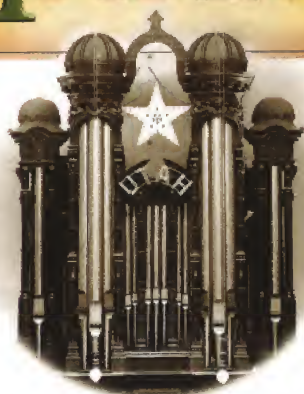
We hope you enjoy this very special Tabernacle issue and are able to personally visit the refurbished building in the near future. You may also be interested in obtaining one of the beautiful 2007 medallions minted in gold, silver, or bronze. You may order these from the above identified website. ▣

Renovation of the Salt Lake Tabernacle, 2005–2007.



The SALT LAKE TABERNACLE

IN THE 19TH CENTURY: A GLIMPSE OF EARLY MORMONISM



by Ronald W. Walker

THE SALT LAKE TABERNACLE—that grand old dame of pioneer Utah—has a story to tell, if only we have enough curiosity to seek it. Set on a rolling slope at Church headquarters, during the nineteenth century it towered above the surrounding landscape, especially before the growth of trees and shrubs and other buildings closed off the view of it. Its presence was more than physical. The Tabernacle was, after all, the most important public building of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the last part of the nineteenth century. It was where the Saints came to worship each Sunday, weather permitting. It was also where thousands of outsiders came to see Mormons firsthand; and after their visits, they recorded details that Zion's own men and women often failed to mention. In short, the Tabernacle was where early Mormonism revealed itself to contemporaries. . . .

Before Joseph Smith's death, he commissioned a "tabernacle" to be built just west of the Nauvoo Temple. Smith envisioned a building perhaps 250 feet long and 125 feet wide, and his

followers took steps toward a makeshift version of the project that required 4,000 yards of canvas, only to abandon their task when they were forced to evacuate their headquarters and move west.² However, the idea lingered. The Mormons . . . later used the name "tabernacle," shape and approximate size, and layout (west of a temple) when building the Salt Lake Tabernacle. . . .

Makeshift [open-air] pavilions built on Temple Square . . . were called bowers or "bow-eries" for the evergreen branches placed on poles to form a sort of roof. For seats, the settlers used pine benches, some backed and others unbacked, on which the better-off worshippers put hair or "cornshuck" cushions. Kerosene lamps furnished light. During the pioneer period, the settlers constructed five of these makeshift structures, including one built at their initial fort. The largest and most enduring, built in the early 1860s, may have held more than 8,000 people.³ It had a speaking rostrum that resembled the stage of a "good-sized theatre." A . . . table . . . served as a podium, behind which Church leaders sat in cane settees and chairs.⁴

Another forerunner to the Tabernacle was the "Old Tabernacle," built in 1851–52. The building occupied a location on Temple Square's

*"This decent, pious host
Rises en masse, as the grand organ rolls,
Praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!"*

—H. Russ¹



southwest precinct, its longest side running north and south. . . . They had hastily built the Old Tabernacle as a stopgap measure until something larger and more lasting could be built. Brigham Young himself called the 66-by-166 foot building “plain” and “simple. . . .”⁵ Perhaps in a bid to cut costs and to insulate against the extremes of the Great Basin’s weather, the Mormons designed much of the interior to be below ground level, including all of its seats. Thus, seen from the outside, the building had a squat appearance, its vertical rise disproportional to its length and width.

Whatever its outward quality, the Old Tabernacle was a minor engineering success, particularly its free-standing ceiling. Rather than support the ceiling with internal columns, Church architect Truman O. Angell designed a system of arching beams that held the roof in place by an attached network of trusses. I “found it uncommon[ly] strong,” Angell wrote in his diary after building a model to test his lattice truss design. It is “good to bear 8 or 10 times besides the weight of the roofing. . . .”⁶

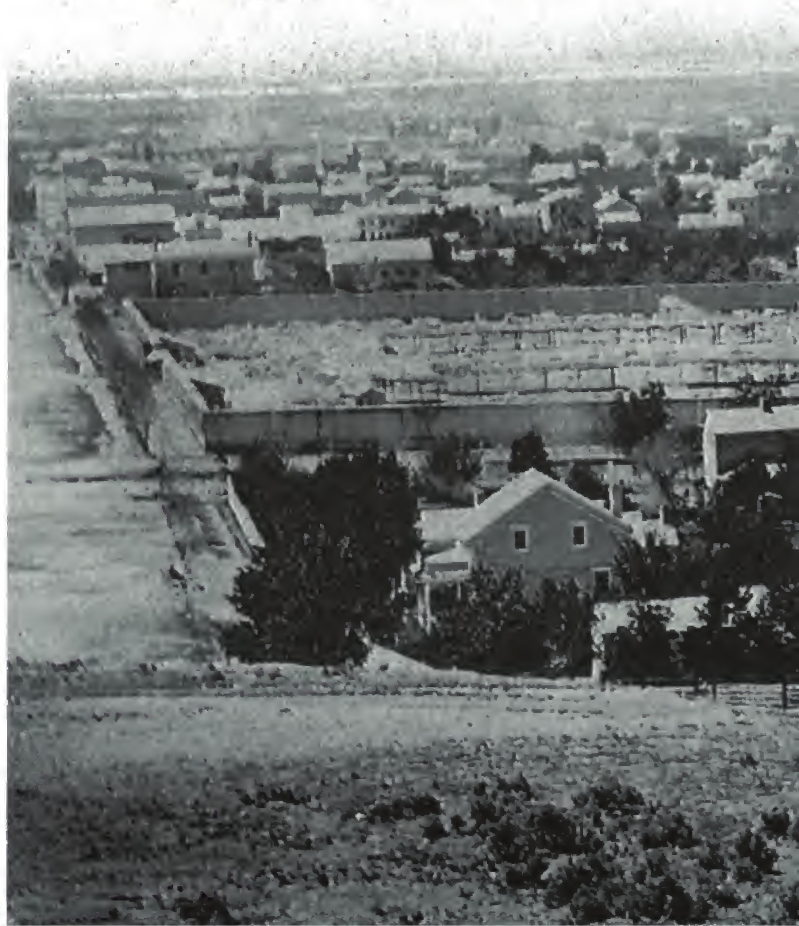
California emigrant Lucy Rutledge Cooke, corresponding with her sister in the East, described the Old Tabernacle as “a beautiful large building very plain and neat but a better one for accommodating an audience of 2500 I never saw. There are four large doors one at each corner which makes a good breeze through. There are no galleries but the seats are all raised from the front up where the speakers are. I have been once on a Sunday. The singing is so nice. It is led by an English band [choir] who sings good old English tunes. The place is always full.”⁷

It was precisely this last fact that made Brigham Young speak of the need for a larger meeting hall almost as soon as the Old Tabernacle was dedicated. According to Young’s calculation, the building could hold only 2,260 adults (from 120 to 175 pounds each)—fewer than the many people who might wish to attend the city’s weekly Sabbath service and far fewer than the number who attended the Church’s general conference.⁸ Another flaw was the Old Tabernacle’s unbearable heat in the summer, if no breeze freshened the air. Because of these reasons, the Mormons continued to use their boweries in the middle 1850s and 1860s during the summers or for conferences. However, when conditions were wet or cooler, the Saints reverted to the Old Tabernacle.

In 1863 work was begun on a new tabernacle, which in time simply became known as the Tabernacle. . . . Once more, Young wanted no view-obstructing poles; and for a time, an Old Tabernacle-like pitched or peaked roof was considered, with three octagonal domes or ventilators. Church architect William H. Folsom drew the plans, although Young served in a general way as his own architect, as he reportedly claimed. “The form of the building was the design of President Brigham Young,” wrote a newspaper correspondent, who inquired when the building was nearly finished. Young “was desirous that the lattice work principle should be introduced into the construction of this large edifice.”⁹

It soon became apparent that the roof designed by Folsom would not easily work for a building so wide and low as the contemplated new hall. As a result, Church leaders decided on an innovative, self-supporting oval dome for the Tabernacle—essentially a rounded top placed upon a bowery. . . . Fortunately, Utah had a man for such a job. Prior to coming west, Henry Grow had built bridges in Pennsylvania. . . .¹⁰ Grow superintended the construction of the new roof and other parts of the building as well. . . .

At first the Mormons covered the exterior with slate-colored wooden shingles, perhaps as many as 350,000.¹¹





Another forerunner to the Tabernacle was the "Old Tabernacle," built in 1851–52. The building occupied a location on Temple Square's southwest precinct, its longest side running north and south. Early construction site of Tabernacle pictured below.

These shingles were stained with a solution of lime, lamp black, tallow, and salt, which gave the building a dark aspect.¹² However, after the Tabernacle was nearly ignited by an 1883 explosion in a nearby wagon yard and, in 1887, by a spark from a fireworks display, the shingles were replaced by tin sheeting and still later by a series of metal roofs.¹³

Church leaders hoped to make short work of the building's construction. But the piers had to settle, and seasoned lumber for the huge beams was not easy to come by. It was therefore not until 1867 that the Saints met in their new building, and then it was unfinished. Its eastern end doors still required work, and the congregation apparently did not have the comfort of new benches. The

need to finish the building's exterior and interior, including a sweeping gallery built in 1870, and perhaps most importantly, to complete the mammoth organ put off the dedication until 1875, when Elder John Taylor gave one of the Mormons' hallowing, down-to-the-last detail prayers, which defined the building's use. "We. . . dedicate and consecrate this house unto thee," Taylor intoned, "as a place of worship for thy Saints, wherein thy people may assemble from time to time, . . . to observe thy holy Sabbath, to partake of thy holy Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and wherein they may associate for the purpose of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, . . . and whatsoever purpose thy people shall assemble in thy name."¹⁴ Twenty years had gone into the planning and construction, although most of the work had taken place during 1864–70.



SUNDAY *Worship*

Tabernacle] worship . . . was community worship. Each Sunday every Saint in the city was invited to “go to meeting” on Temple Square. Although perhaps fewer than one in seven or eight visited the Tabernacle on a particular Sunday (bad weather made percentages worse), the practice expressed the Mormon hope for unity and togetherness. There was a general pattern: The morning two-hour service was occupied by only one or two speakers, perhaps Church leaders. The afternoon meetings often had briefer sermons delivered by men in the congregation, who might volunteer or be called upon to speak. Whether in the morning or afternoon, speakers were expected to follow the scriptural ideal by taking no forethought for their remarks but to speak by the Holy Spirit’s prompting (Matt. 10:19; Mark 13:11). In practice, this meant that speakers avoided prepared texts, dialogued with the congregation, issued reproof and correction, and even amused the Saints with stories and good humor. . . .

For many years, the Mormon congregation was divided by gender. “The men come into this [Old] Tabernacle at one end door, and the women at the other,” Hannah Clapp, on her way to a distinguished career as a Nevada educator, explained in 1859.¹ The

reason was simple: The Mormons did not want their women mixing with Gentiles, especially with U.S. soldiers who had arrived in the territory after the Utah War. Church leaders therefore ran a barrier through the center of the Old Tabernacle and put the women on the north side and the men on the south.² The practice continued after the Tabernacle was built. “The men and women were mostly but not strictly separated,” reported Salt

Conference crowd, ca. 1911.





Lake resident R. A. N. Harvey. At first the women were assigned the seats directly in front of the podium, while the gentlemen occupied the side seats. While the arrangement was later changed, gender seating revealed an interesting fact: two-thirds of the adults attending a Tabernacle service were often women. “The inference to be drawn from this circumstance . . . is self-evident,” said English traveler Samuel Day knowingly. He was of course invoking polygamy as the explanation.³

There was another characteristic of the Tabernacle’s congregation: the “most striking thing” about a Mormon audience was the over-abundance of infants and children. “Certainly every second . . . [woman] had a child with her,” said one visitor, and these young Mormons had a way of making themselves known. To quiet their infants, many women breast-fed them during meetings. . . .⁴

Tabernacle seating deliberately accommodated visitors, a canny public relations gesture. Usually a Sunday afternoon congregation included over a hundred Gentile tourists, who were even the best seats in the center of the Tabernacle near the rostrum.⁵ The Mormons’ graciousness probably had to do with the desire to offset the prevailing negative stereotypes about them and perhaps to proselytize. . . .

The Mormon celebration of the Lord’s Supper, incorporated into the Sunday afternoon “sacrament meeting,” was another item that brought comment. Because the Mormons offered the emblems widely and democratically, the logistics alone were impressive. To accomplish the task, the bishops began at the start of the meeting by breaking the stacked piles of bread on the bishops’ table into small pieces. The officiator then signaled the speaker to pause for a prayer of blessing, which might be offered by one of the bishops, standing with both arms raised in supplication. After a small squad of men passed the bread to the congregation, a similar ceremony was completed for the sacramental water. Most of the two-hour meeting was required to complete the two ordinances.⁶ In 1894 Church leaders ended its performance at the Tabernacle and requested Church members to partake of the emblems at their neighborhood ward meetings.⁷

The decision was another in a long, step-by-step process. For forty years, Church leaders had slowly moved worship functions from the Tabernacle—once the primary meeting place in the Mormon settlement—to the

almost two dozen local Salt Lake City congregations or wards. . . . Salt Lake City had too many people and was spread too widely to gather Church members easily to a single location. Although Tabernacle Sunday afternoon services remained a fixture into the third decade of the twentieth century, these meetings mainly were for “out-of-towners,” including curious outsiders who still wanted to get a view of Mormon belief and peculiarity.

For many Saints, the change from community to neighborhood worship was wrenching. It ended the chance to rub shoulders with friends and to renew ties on a citywide basis; sociability had always been a large part of the Saints’ worship. There was, however, a bright side. The eclipse of community worship and community religious unity were an acceptable price to meet the demands of Mormon growth and success. ▀

Excerpts from Ronald W. Walker, “The Salt Lake Tabernacle in the Nineteenth Century: A Glimpse of Early Mormonism,” Journal of Mormon History 31.3 (Fall 2005): 232–38.

Notes

1 Hannah Keziah Clapp, “A Salt Lake City Stopover, July 1859,” in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1840–1890*, ed. and comp. by Kenneth L. Holmes (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1983–1993), 7:247.

2 Wilford Woodruff, Diary, January 2, 1859, LDS Church Archives.

3 R. A. N. Harvey, *Life’s Real Romance* (Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham, 1885), 2:66; “The New Tabernacle,” *Salt Lake Telegraph*, October 6, 1867, 2; Samuel Day, *Life and Society in America* (London: Newman, 1880), 244–45.

4 Annic Morris, “A Week among the Mormons,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* 6 (July 1870): 46; Henry W. Lucy, *East by West: A Journey in the Recess* (London: Richard Bentley, 1885), 99; Susie Champney Clark, *The Round Trip from the Hub to the Golden Gate* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1890), 161–62.

5 Alexander Majors, quoted in Prentiss Ingraham, ed., *Seventy Years on the Frontier* (Columbus, OH: Long’s College Book, 1950), 60.

6 Joseph F. Smith, Sermon, July 16, 1893, in *Collected Discourses, 1886–1898*, ed. Brian H. Stuy (Burbank, CA: R.H.S. Publishing, 1987–92), 3:308.

7 James Harris, ed., *The Essential James E. Talmage* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 51.

CORRECTION: In the last issue of *Pioneer* magazine (2007, Vol. 54, #1, page 19), in the article “Following the Trail of Zion’s Camp,” the map was incorrectly labeled. The state above Missouri should read **IOWA**.

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—U.S. Representative Joe L. Barton



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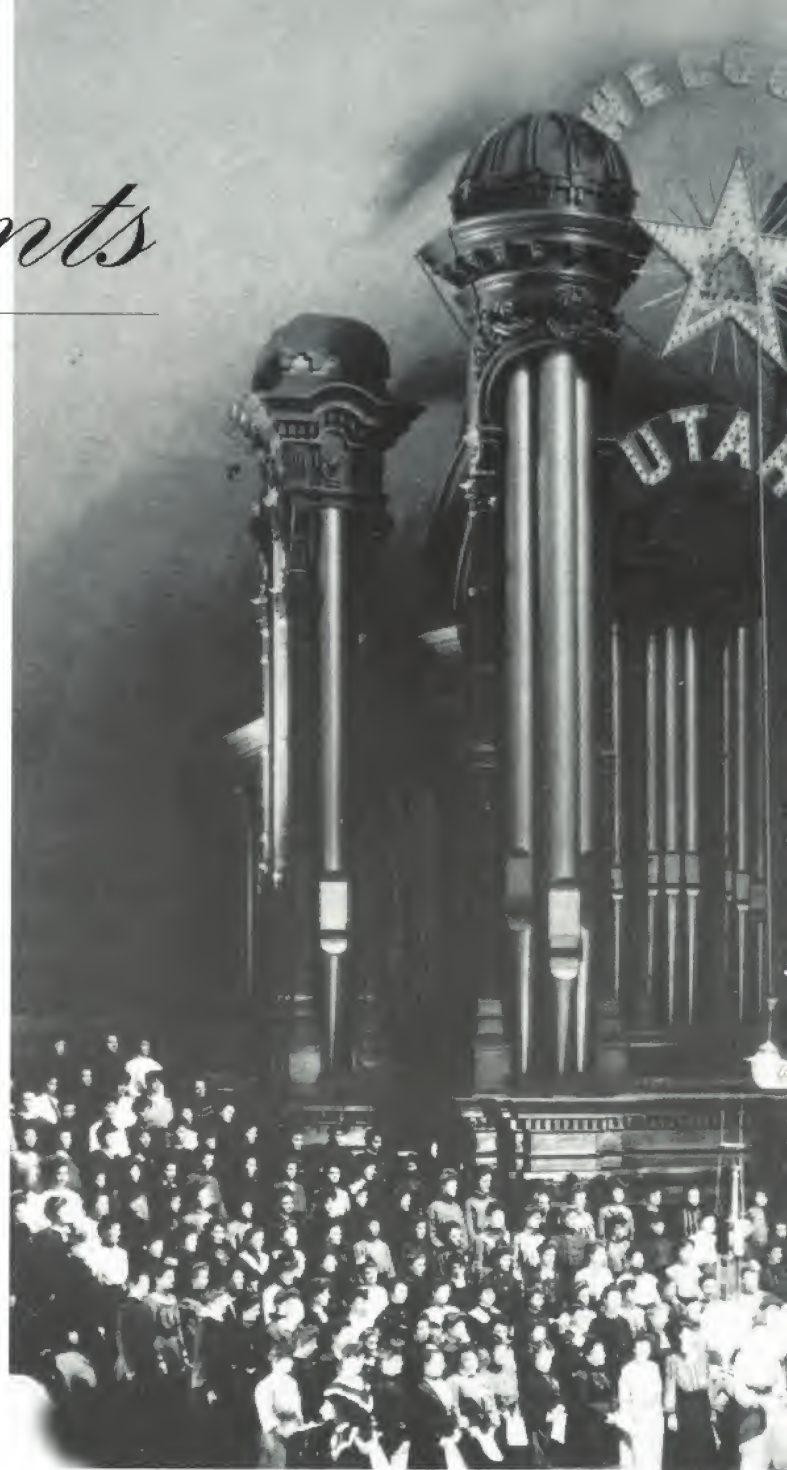
by Grant E. Barton

In his dedicatory prayer of 1875, John Taylor, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, dedicated the Great Tabernacle to the Lord as “a holy and sacred place wherein thy servants may stand forth to declare thy words and minister unto thy people.”¹ As indicated, the primary purpose of the Great Tabernacle over the last 140 years has been for Church members to gather and receive inspired guidance from their leaders. Many of the announcements of revelation, Church policy, and organizational changes have been made over the pulpit at general conference. A second purpose has been an outreach to those who are not Church members, primarily through 78 years of weekly Tabernacle broadcasts and tourists flocking to the pioneer edifice. A third major use has been a civic center for lectures, concerts, funerals, and other cultural events.

PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENTS

Vision of the Redemption of the Dead. In the opening session of the October 1918 general conference, President Joseph F. Smith declared: “I have not lived alone these five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith . . . and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously.” It was later learned that on the day before conference, President Smith had received a manifestation recorded as the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead.²

Family Home Evening. President John Taylor first presented in the Tabernacle the topic of family home evenings.³ A 1915 letter signed by the First Presidency urged “the inauguration of a ‘Home Evening’ throughout the Church,” with the promise that “If the Saints obey this counsel . . . Love at home and obedience to parents will increase, . . . faith will be developed in the



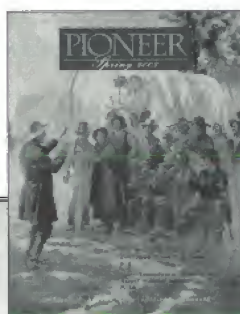
hearts of the youth . . . and they will gain power to combat the evil influence and temptations which beset them.”⁴

SUSTAINING VOTES

Modern Scripture. Although the Doctrine and Covenants was originally sustained as scripture at a conference in Kirtland, subsequent revelations had been added. In the October 1880 general conference in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, President Joseph F. Smith moved that the assembled members “receive and accept” the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price “as revelations from God to the Church

“I HAVE A MISSION FOR YOU,” [Brigham Young] told one of the men chosen to lead the choir. “I want you to take the Tabernacle Choir . . . and lay a foundation for good music.”⁷ During the Tabernacle’s first years, the choir’s size for a Sunday service may have been around seventy-five voices, most of them women’s. However, by 1883 the choir was large enough to justify the expansion of the loft to hold 200 singers. By the end of the century, the choir might swell to 350 and even 500 singers for a session of the Church’s general conference.⁸

It was not just the technical excellence of the choir that was so appealing. Mormon music had emotion. “I never heard such enchanting music. It seemed grand and inspiring beyond power to express,” said Andrew Shiland, a Presbyterian Church excursionist, after hearing the choir’s rendition of Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus*.⁹ George Romsper, another denominational tourist, thought that he had



never heard “sweeter music,” while Major William Bell of the British Army liked the “general and powerful harmony” that was “unequaled” in his experience of enjoying church music.¹⁰ See Michael Hicks, “Beginnings of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir,” *Pioneer magazine* (Spring 2003): 19–26.

Tabernacle.”¹¹ Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were sustained in general conferences before the body of the Church moved West.

MISSIONARY OUTREACH

Missionary Calls. At the dedicatory conference on October 9, 1875, George Q. Cannon read the names of 105 persons called to leave their homes and go on missions. One hundred years later, at the Centennial Observance of the Tabernacle, Elder Howard W. Hunter, then of the Council of the Twelve, noted that if the practice of calling missionaries from the Tabernacle podium had continued to that day, “it would be necessary to read the names of 7,923 persons . . . which alone would take about one-half of the total time of this three-day assembly.”¹²

Music and the Spoken Word. In 1929, almost 80 years ago, the national broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* began and has continued uninterrupted to this day. However, the Tabernacle Choir had its home in the Tabernacle for 50 years prior to the weekly broadcasts. The Tabernacle Choir is inextricably connected to this building and “has been a voice of the Church for many years.”¹³

RELIGIOUS MEETINGS

General Conferences. Earlier saints met in conference more often than we do today. For many years, general conferences were held quarterly and lasted several days. After the first conference in the Tabernacle had already continued for three days, “President Young asked

of Jesus Christ and to all the world. The motion was seconded and sustained by unanimous vote of the whole conference.”⁵

The Word of Wisdom. “In 1908 in a general conference, President Joseph F. Smith read section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Word of Wisdom. . . . Then a vote to accept it as binding upon the members of the Church was unanimously passed.”⁶

Sustaining of the Church Leaders. “Every President of the Church, except Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, has been sustained in a solemn assembly in this



the congregation if they wanted to adjourn or if they preferred to continue for another day. The vote to continue was unanimous.”¹⁴

Funeral Services. It is fitting that President Brigham Young, who had envisioned the Tabernacle dome, was among the first to have his funeral services in the building—just two years after it was completed. Since that time, all Church presidents have had their funeral services there, except Joseph F. Smith, who died during a decimating flu epidemic and had a simple graveside service. Funeral services for many other Church leaders have similarly been held in the Tabernacle. In addition, memorial services have been held in the Tabernacle for three U.S. Presidents killed by assassins: Presidents Garfield, McKinley, and Kennedy.¹⁵

Sunday Meetings. It took just one week after entering the Valley for returning Mormon Battalion members to build a bowery (the first of three) on the southeast corner of the Temple block to shade the Saints during Sunday services and conferences. The practice of conducting Sunday services (morning and afternoon) on Temple Square continued even after the Tabernacle was built, until the 1930s when the practice was discontinued.¹⁶

Baptismal Services. Between 1890 and 1999 tens of thousands of baptisms were performed in the baptistery in the southwest corner of the basement of the Tabernacle, predominantly serving 10 neighboring stakes. In a typical baptismal service, 10 to 12 people were baptized. Seating was for 110 persons. The font has been removed in the recent renovation.¹⁷

John Taylor's 1887 funeral in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.



CIVIC MEETINGS

Symphony Orchestras. The Tabernacle was home to the Utah Symphony for almost 60 years. Other symphony orchestras that have performed there include the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Symphony, and the Minneapolis Symphony. Musical luminaries who have performed with these symphonies include Paderewski, Fritz Kreisler, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Jascha Heifetz, and Van Cliburn.¹⁸

Lectures. In the early years, because of its large seating capacity, the Tabernacle hosted lectures on a wide variety of subjects of community interest. Possibly the first of these was a three-day series of debates between Apostle Orson Pratt and Dr. John P. Newman, chaplain of the U.S. Senate, on the question “Does the Bible Sanction Polygamy?”¹⁹ “Madame Mountford, a native of Jerusalem, attracted audiences for three successive nights in 1897 with her lectures on life in Palestine. Senator Frank J. Church lectured on ‘The Manners and Customs of the Japanese and Chinese.’”²⁰ Susan B. Anthony spoke on women’s suffrage. Early in its history, the Tabernacle was the site of a mass protest meeting over the conduct of federal appointees in the Territory.²¹ For several years, the Tabernacle has hosted a Sunrise Service at 7 a.m. on the 24th of July, Pioneer Day, initiated by the Salt Lake Pioneer Chapter of the Sons of Utah Pioneers.

Choirs. The Zion’s Choral Union sang in the Tabernacle in 1887. The Welsh singing festival was held there in 1895. The Salt Lake Oratorio Society traditionally presented Handel’s *Messiah* during the Christmas season. During some MIA June Conferences, youth choirs of more than 1,000 singers have performed.²²

CONCLUSION

President Gordon B. Hinckley in his 2007 re-dedicatory address said of the Tabernacle: “The Spirit of the Lord has been in this structure. It is sacred unto us.” This venerated edifice has served as an anchor “from which the voice of the servants of the Lord should go forth to the world.” He emphasized the Tabernacle’s multifaceted uses: “Now, each Sabbath day, *Music and the Spoken Word* will again go to the world from this Tabernacle at ‘the crossroads of the West.’ It will again be home to the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square, and will also accommodate many other productions and undertakings. It will be used for stake and regional

conferences, public lectures, musical concerts, and other entertainment.”²³ ▣

Notes

- 1 Eleanor Knowles, “Focal Point for Important Events,” *Improvement Era* (April 1967): 22–25.
- 2 Bishop H. David Burton, “If These Old Walls Could Talk,” *Ensign* (May 2007): 32–33.
- 3 Joseph F. Merrill, “Home Evening,” *Improvement Era* (Jan. 1918): 203.
- 4 James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–), 4:337–39.
- 5 Journal History of the Church, 24 February 1902, 2.
- 6 Boyd K. Packer, “The Spirit of the Tabernacle,” *Ensign* (May 2007): 28.
- 7 See Ron W. Walker, “The Salt Lake Tabernacle in the Nineteenth Century: A Glimpse of Early Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31:3 (Fall 2005), 230–231. Quoted in J. Spencer Cornwall, *A Century of Singing: The Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 352.
- 8 Size of the choir and women: Alfred Rowland, “Mormonism As It Is,” *The Leisure Hour* 36 (1887): 94; enough singers: Cornwall, *A Century of Singing*, 257; loft expansion: “The Tabernacle,” *Deseret Evening News*, September 29, 1883, E–5; voices at conference: Cornwall, *A Century of Singing*, 161; Isabella Kimball Dinsmore, *Trips and Travel: Letters to the Unitarian Alliance*

(Belfast, Maine: n. pub., 1929), 103; and Andrew Shiland, *From Ocean to Ocean: With Notes and Observations on the Way* (New York: American Tract Society, 1892), 5.

9 Shiland, 5.

10 George W. Romsper, *The Western Echo: A Description of the Western States and Territories of the United States as Gathered in a Tour by Wagon* (Dayton, Ohio: United Brethren Publishing House, 1881), 332; and William Morrison Bell, *Other Countries* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), 247. Also see William H. Myers, *Through Wonderland to Alaska* (Reading: Eng. Reading Times Print, 1895), 180–81.

11 Ibid., 27.

12 Howard W. Hunter, “The Tabernacle,” *Ensign* (November 1975): 96.

13 Packer, 28.

14 *Church News*, Week ending September 30, 1967, 5.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Knowles, 25.

18 Ibid., 24–25.

19 Ibid., 22.

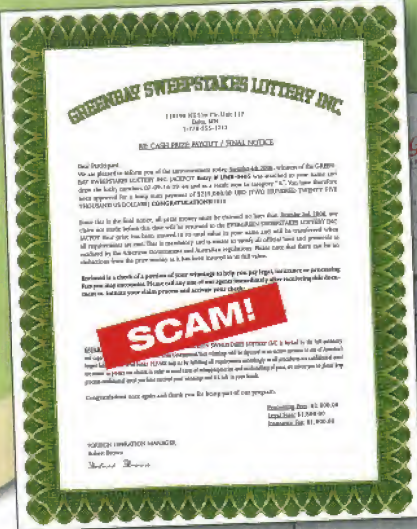
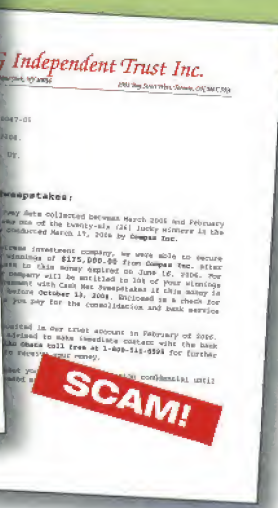
20 Ibid., 25.

21 *Church News*, 5.

22 Knowles, 25.

23 Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tabernacle in the Wilderness,” *Ensign* (May 2007): 43.

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A COMMUNITY *Gathering Place*

by Tiffany Taylor

Its unique, dome-shaped roof has intrigued visitors since its completion in 1867. From its pulpit, Latter-day Saint prophets, United States presidents, and other influential figures have addressed the world. Its exceptional acoustic qualities have astounded musicians and made it an ideal home for the acclaimed Mormon Tabernacle Choir. This historic landmark is the Great Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Tabernacle was built to provide Latter-day Saints in Utah with a large enough meeting hall to accommodate the growing number of Church members for religious services and other special events. It was the largest structure of its sort in the region and, as such, it was also utilized for community functions and to host important national and international performers and politicians.

Gordon B. Hinckley, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, remarked that the Tabernacle “has truly been a centerpiece for this community throughout all of these many years.”¹ Indeed, the Tabernacle’s earliest function, outside of its religious purposes, was to host community commemorations and celebrations. Perhaps the grandest of these civic celebrations came on January 4, 1896, when, after years of petitioning the federal government, Utah was admitted as the 45th state in the United States of America.

On January 6, 1896, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the decorations at the Tabernacle, where the inaugural ceremonies had been held, were “lavish and beautiful in the extreme.” The central feature of the celebratory décor was “a mammoth flag, 125 x 75 feet, which [was] spread beneath the ceiling” and hung over the entire auditorium. Crowds at the inauguration especially enjoyed that the 45th star on the mammoth



Tabernacle decorations for the inaugural ceremonies. Right: A celebration in the Tabernacle. The words draped over the organ pipes say, “Welcome, Utah, God Bless Our Sunday School.”

flag—Utah’s star—was outlined in electric lights.² The *Deseret News* described “a great American eagle” mounted on “the tower between the great pipes of the organ.” Below the eagle, was an illuminated outline of “the magic word ‘Utah’—a magnificent electrical creation.”³ State politicians and Church leaders addressed the crowds that had joined in a great musical celebration of their statehood.

On a smaller scale, the variety of community affairs held at the Tabernacle included an annual celebration for the area’s elderly citizens. A *Deseret News* article entitled “The Treat for the Old Folks” noted that “a delightful programme is being prepared by the committee



for the Old Folks.” The festivities were to include a “grand concert . . . in the Tabernacle, next Wednesday,”⁴ after which the group was to be addressed by Salt Lake City Mayor William Jennings and LDS church president John Taylor.

In addition to frequent performances by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, community residents enjoyed various performances by smaller local choirs. In June 1892, choirs from Provo, Springville, Spanish Fork, and Lehi combined to demonstrate what was thought to be the musical talent that abounded in the cities south of Salt Lake. In 1898, the *Ogden Standard Examiner* reported that the Ogden chorus, which had previously “won recognition at the recent



Eisteddfod at Salt Lake,” would be performing in what would be “one of the grandest musical events of the season.” The newspaper encouraged

readers to “Go and Hear Them,” stating that “Ogden can show its appreciation in no better manner than to fill the tabernacle to overflowing tonight, that it may serve as a testimonial to their pride in the success of the chorus.”⁵ While local musical talent was appreciated and enjoyed at the Tabernacle, it was a stunning roster of world-famous musicians that filled the building beyond its capacity.

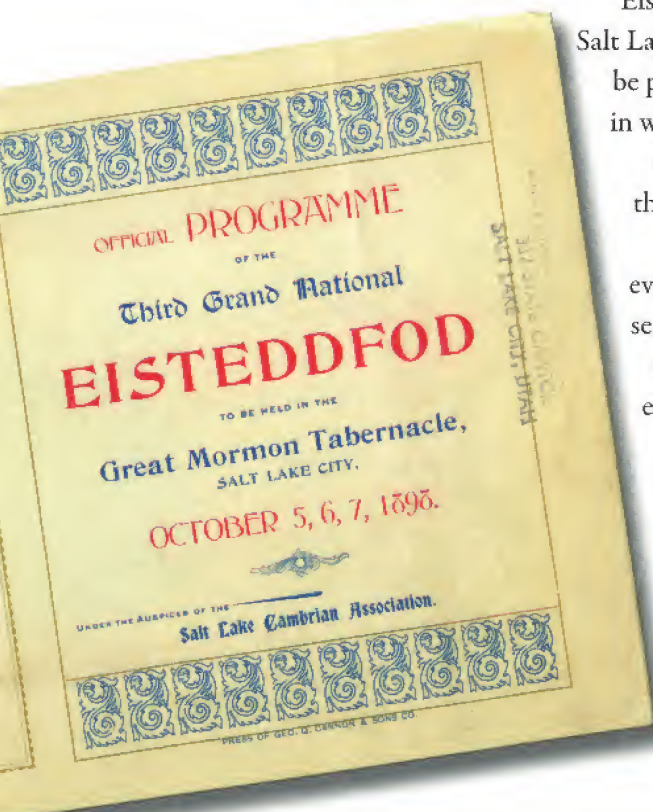
A Myriad of Legendary Musicians

In 1873, just six years after the completion of the Tabernacle, the building’s acoustic reputation enticed world-renowned soprano Madame Anna Riviere Bishop to participate in Salt Lake City’s Fourth of July celebrations. On July 7, 1873, the *Salt Lake Tribune* described the talented Englishwoman’s performance as a “Monster Concert at the Tabernacle. . . . The array of talent was such as was never before seen in the City of Saints.”⁶

Madame Bishop was the first of a number of world-famous performers to entertain at the Tabernacle in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, Madame Adelina Patti, the Italian opera singer touted to be the “greatest lady vocalist living,” visited Salt Lake and toured the Tabernacle with Her Majesty’s Opera Company from London. According to a report from the *Deseret News*, Patti “was so delighted with the remarkable acoustic properties of the building, that she expressed a great desire to sing there.”⁷

When Madame Patti returned to the area in May 1884, musical mayhem broke out in the Salt Lake Valley. The *Ogden Standard Examiner* described ticket sales for the event as the “Patti Panic.” “Gas and the heaters are being rapidly crowded into the Tabernacle,” the paper reported, “and the chances are that the building will present a very brilliant appearance on the night of the performance. . . . It will be the grandest affair of the kind that ever occurred in Utah. The enthusiasm is great and genuine.”⁸

On Tuesday, April 1, 1884, before a crowd of between six and seven thousand people, “Madame Patti made her appearance on the platform amid thunders of applause, dressed in an elegant satin of white and azure,



The “Eisteddfod” of Welsh origin is a contest in singing, performing with instruments, writing essays and poetry. Judge H. M. Edwards, the prince of Eisteddfod conductors, and Dr. Parry, the leading musical authority of Wales, came in 1898, cross continent, to judge the competition.



ITALIAN OPERA SINGER MADAME ADELINA PATTI PERFORMED AT THE TABERNACLE IN 1884 "AMID THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE."⁹

—Portrait by Franz Winterhalter, 1862

with lace and pearl trimmings, and glittering from head to foot with diamonds. But the magnificence of her attire was not equal to the richness of her wondrous voice, which it would be impossible for pen or tongue to describe."¹⁰ After the performance, a writer from the *Deseret News* mused: "As the sun with its rising eclipses all the stars of the firmament, even the moon herself, hitherto the reigning queen of heaven, retiring reluctantly before the superior splendor of the orb of day, so the coming of Patti has driven from our minds the remembrance of all former favorites, and established undisputed empire over the great, throbbing musical heart of this community."¹¹

Other prominent musicians drew large crowds to the city's great auditorium. In 1889, the *Salt Lake Tribune* announced that Patrick S. Gilmore, also known as the "Father of the American Band" who had composed such classics as "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" of Civil War fame, would be performing a series of concerts at the Tabernacle. These concerts would, the *Tribune* asserted, be "undoubtedly the grandest musical events Salt Lake has ever known."¹²

In March 1894, the legendary musician John Philip Sousa arrived in Salt Lake City with the United States Marine band. They performed at the Salt Lake Theater, but it was concluded that the "Theater is too circumscribed in size for the best results of the heavier selections of this large band. In such numbers the Tabernacle will be found more satisfactory." Sousa reportedly "felt very keenly . . . that Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore's band had successively appeared in

the mammoth auditorium [the Tabernacle] while the Marine Band was interdicted its use.”¹³

Questions pertaining to the use of the Tabernacle were quickly resolved, and Sousa’s band manager, David Blakely, reportedly made arrangements “for the return engagement of the Sousa band at the Tabernacle in conjunction with Salt Lake’s great choir May 1st.”¹⁴ The *Salt Lake Tribune* declared: “Now . . . all is lovely and the goose remains on high while the new Sousa Band discourses sweet music in the sacred edifice.”¹⁵ The performance was “truly a May Day festival,” and the “varied and excellent programme given by the celebrated band and our own local musicians was greatly enjoyed by all.”¹⁶ Echoing the claims of reporters after other such performances at the Tabernacle, the *Salt Lake Tribune* concluded that “it was, in fact, one of the finest concerts ever given in the mammoth building in the Temple block.”¹⁷

The next year, famed Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaye paid a visit to Salt Lake City. His June 3, 1895, performance drew a crowd of between eight and ten thousand people. Newspapers suspected that “the

audience was the largest one since Patti sang in the same historic building.”¹⁸

In 1896, Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski added his name to the growing list of remarkable performers at the Tabernacle. Headlines proclaimed: “Paderewski the Great. The Famous Pianist Plays in the Tabernacle.” The audience for the performance was large, but unfortunately, “not as big as [Paderewski’s] Management hoped for.” When “Paderewski made his first bow to a Salt Lake audience,” the Tabernacle was only “half filled, the two center aisles being packed, while a number occupied the best seats in the gallery.” Though smaller than expected, the crowd comprised what was described as “an extremely fashionable assemblage,” and Paderewski’s performance was “truly wonderful as the most enthusiastic have claimed.”¹⁹

The Tabernacle’s remarkable acoustic qualities continue to provide a public musical venue.

Politics, Lectures, and Presidents

Other events held at the Tabernacle during the nineteenth century included political and scholarly lectures. Records of political gatherings made note of such things as “a mass meeting of citizens [being] held on Saturday afternoon, July 16th, at the Tabernacle,” to question nominees for local political offices.²⁰ In February 1889, it was reported that “the People’s party rally will take place at the Tabernacle on Saturday night.”²¹

Illustrious orators utilized the Tabernacle as a place to address large crowds. On March 16, 1892, President Charles William Eliot of Harvard University spoke before an audience of seven thousand people. President Eliot, who is credited with having transformed Harvard into America’s preeminent research university,



— John Philip Sousa



WORLD-FAMED ORGAN

One of the building's most important fixtures was the great organ. Once the construction of the Tabernacle had begun, Brigham Young sought the help of Joseph Ridges, an English-born convert, who had built the Old Tabernacle's organ.¹ The task was Herculean. Huge quantities of glue were produced in on-site boiling vats, using local hides. Also necessary was a special, knot-free wood for the larger pipes, hauled from distant Pine Valley in southern Utah. Gears, keyboard pieces, and other mechanical parts were purchased in the East. Completing the instrument took almost ten years and an estimated \$70,000, an enormous sum for the time. . . .

The organ's . . . size alone compelled respect. "It is fifty-eight feet high, has fifty-seven stops, and contains two thousand six hundred and forty-eight pipes, some of them nearly as large as the chimneys of a Mississippi River steamboat. . . ."² When first played, it was one of the half dozen largest organs in the world and perhaps the largest U.S.-built organ.³ Other visitors were charmed by its "gilded pipes" and "massive pilasters of carved black walnut. . . ."⁴

At first the Tabernacle organ was powered by four men working bellows. Later, the power source was a water mechanism, which could be unreliable.

Ultimately it was not the great organ's size, display, workmanship, or mechanics that won its reputation. Its success came from its sound, which softened even the jaundiced visitor. "Notwithstanding its immense size . . . it has not a single harsh or metallic sound; on the contrary, it is marvelously soft-toned; from the low flute-like wailing voice of the *vox humana* to the deep bass roll which stirs the air like a wave of melodious thunder, it has all the delicacy of the Aeolian harp, with the strength and power of its thousand brazen voices."⁵

The music of the great organ seemed ethereal, metaphysical. It sang of "faraway things you never thought anyone but yourself knew, the very secrets of your soul," said James B. Pond, booking agent for Ann Eliza Webb's anti-Mormon lectures and later a premier lecture agent on the national scene.⁶ Harvey Rice, an educator and historian from the Western Reserve, described its tones as "heavy as the muttering thunders and yet as sweet as the music of the spheres," while Victorian poet and feminist Emily Pfeiffer thought that

the instrument revealed the Mormon soul. Its strains were "mysterious" and "incommunicable," "sudden" and "almost overpowering." The great organ voice wailed "with all the tribulation and sorrow of this hunted community."⁷ ▼



Excerpts taken from Ronald W. Walker, "The Salt Lake Tabernacle in the Nineteenth Century: A Glimpse of Early Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 31.3 (Fall 2005): 228–30.

1 George E. Carpenter, "Men Who Have Done Things: Joseph H. Ridges, the Man Who Built the Tabernacle Organ," *Western Monthly* 12.3 (March 1911): 36–37.

2 Patrick Donan, *Utah: A Peep into a Mountain Walled Treasury of the Gods* (Buffalo: Matthews Northrup Co., 1891), 92.

3 D. Appleton, *Appleton's Handbook of American Travel: Western Tour* (New York: D. Appleton, 1872), 110.

4 J. W. Miller, *The Cincinnati Excursion to California* (Cincinnati: Published for the Indianapolis, Cincinnati & Lafayette R.R., 1870), 34.

5 Mary McDowell Duffus Hardy, "The Tabernacle, Salt Lake City," *Historic Buildings of America as Seen and Described by Famous Writers*, ed. Esther Singleton (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1907), 218.

6 James B. Pond Papers, William L. Clements Library, Univ. of Michigan, retrieved September 2003 from www.clements.umich.edu/Webguides/NP/Pond.html.

7 James B. Pond, "In the Homes of the Mormons," *Travel*, June 1915, 22; Harvey Rice, *Letters from the Pacific Slope* (New York: D. Appleton, 1870), 28; and Emily Pfeiffer, *Flying Leaves from East and West*, 2d. ed. (London: Field and Tuer, 1885), 163.

declared to the crowd: "Universities stand for ideals of learning; of country."²²

Another important oratory event took place on January 29, 1896, when evangelist Charles N. Crittenton, having recently established the National Florence Crittenton Mission to help women in need throughout the country, spoke to a group of four thousand people. The program had originally been scheduled for the Assembly Hall on Temple Square, but "before half-past 7 those anxious to hear Evangelist Crittenton were crowding into the Temple grounds," and "at 7:45 Elias Morris arose and adjourned the meeting into the great Tabernacle." Until 10:00 that night, Crittenton captivated the crowd by speaking of his vision for a national network of homes for the needy.²³

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported another event on May 5, 1898: "A great turnout is expected at the Tabernacle this evening. Miss Helen Kelleher, the famous lecturer, has arrived from the west and will render her lecture on 'California' in the great auditorium tonight at 8:15 o'clock. A nominal charge of 10 cents has been fixed, and the attractiveness of the entertainment should fill the house."²⁴

At the turn of the century, as Salt Lake City continued to increase in its importance as a major Western United States city, increasing numbers of influential politicians visited Utah. Throughout the twentieth century, United States presidents addressed the nation from the Tabernacle pulpit in times of war and peace. Indeed the Tabernacle has always been a centerpiece of the community in Salt Lake City. For over 140 years, this unique, dome-shaped edifice has served as a "decent, pious host"²⁵ to the great musical, political, and spiritual leaders of the world. ▀

Notes

1 President Gordon B. Hinckley, General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Saturday, March 31, 2007, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2 "Great Crowds Coming In," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 6, 1847, 8.

3 "Inaugural Ceremonies," *Deseret News*, January 11, 1847, 18.

4 "The Treat for the Old Folks," *Deseret News*, June 28, 1882, 8.



5 "Concert at the Tabernacle," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, October 13, 1898, 5.

6 "The Fourth of July in Utah. Monster Concert at the Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 7, 1873, 3.

7 "Patti at the Tabernacle," *Deseret News*, March 12, 1884, 9.

8 "Latest Telegrams. Patti Panic," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, March 25, 1884, 2.

9 "Patti: Her Triumph at the Tabernacle," *Deseret News*, April 9, 1884, 1.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 "Music and the Drama. The Great Gilmore Event at the Big Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 13, 1889, 2.

13 "The Sousa Performance," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 17, 1894, 3.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 "Sousa at the Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 1894, 8.

17 Ibid.

18 "Great Crowd Hears Ysaye," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 4, 1895, 5.

19 "Paderewski the Great. The Famous Pianist Plays in the Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 5, 1896, 7.

20 "Nominees for Office," *Deseret News*, July 20, 1870, 6.

21 "Jottings," *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 7, 1889, 3.

22 "At the Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 17, 1892, 5.

23 "Met in the Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 30, 1896, 2.

24 "Tonight's Lecture," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 1898, 8.

25 H. Buss, *Wanderings in the West, During the Year 1870* (London: Printed for Private by Thomas Danks, 1871), 160.



Above left:

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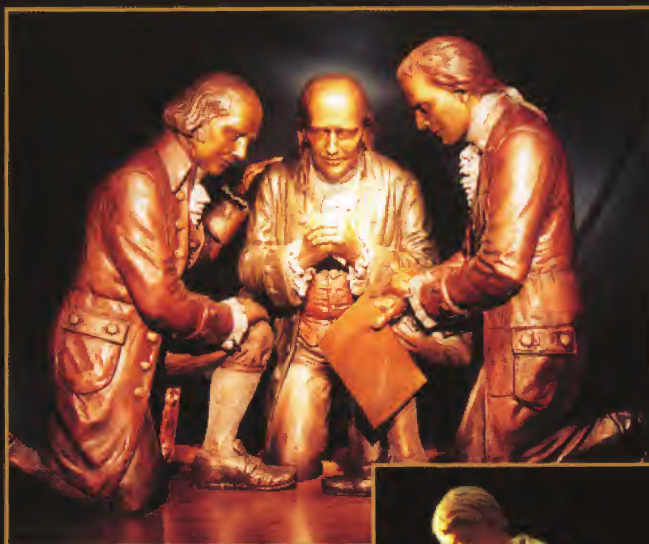
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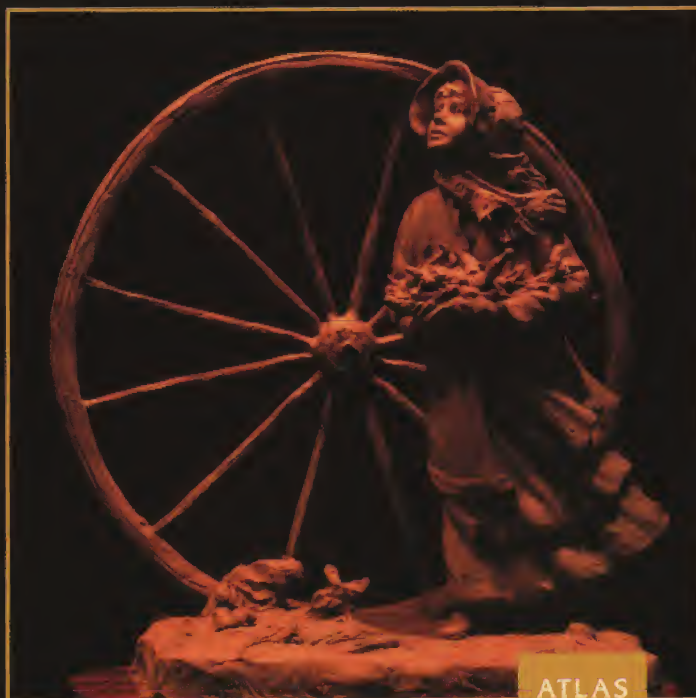
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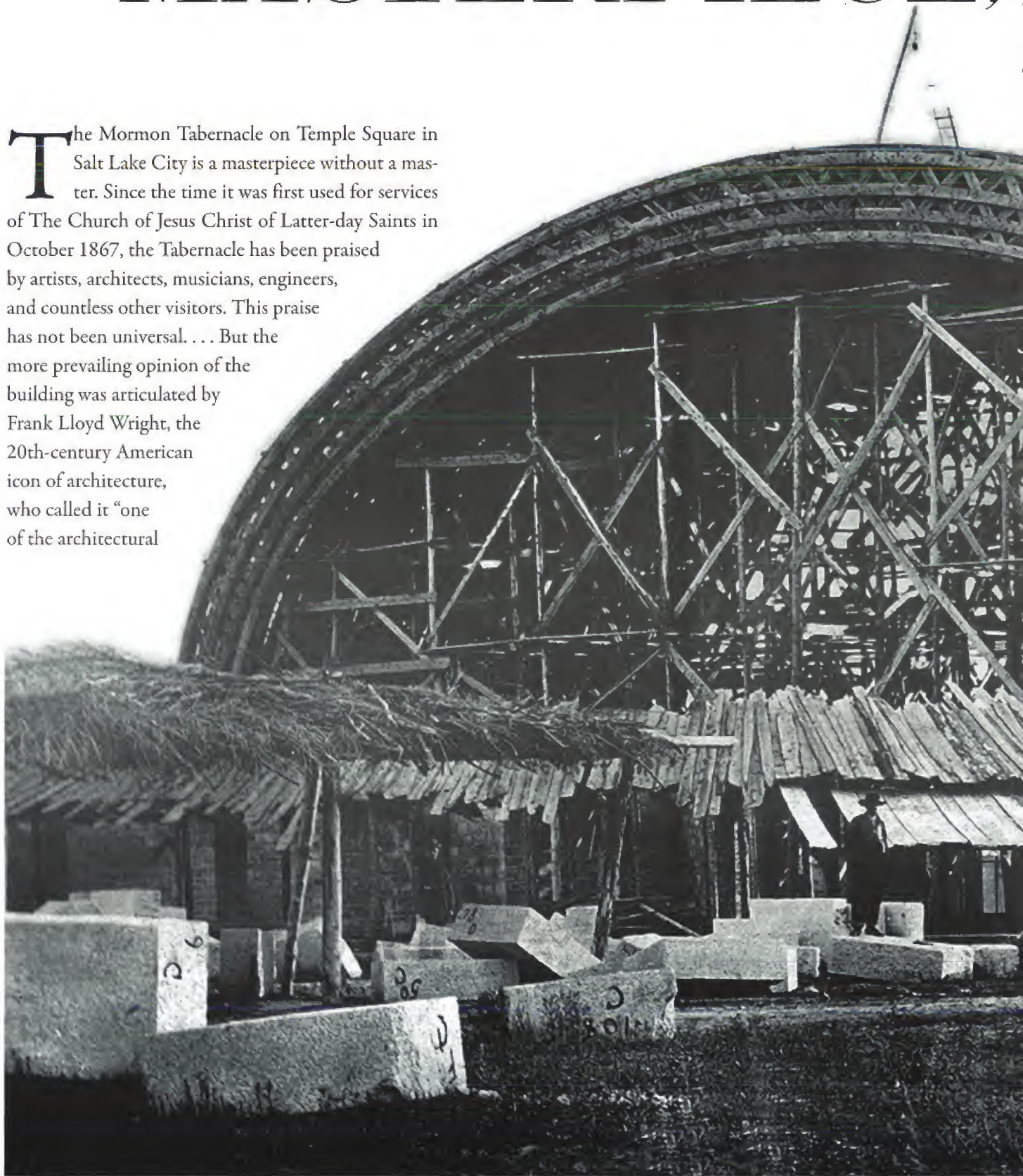
ACCEPTING COMMISSIONS OF SCULPTURES • MONUMENTS • FOUNTAINS • ARCHITECTURAL

by Nathan Grow

One

MASTERPIECE,

The Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City is a masterpiece without a master. Since the time it was first used for services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in October 1867, the Tabernacle has been praised by artists, architects, musicians, engineers, and countless other visitors. This praise has not been universal. . . . But the more prevailing opinion of the building was articulated by Frank Lloyd Wright, the 20th-century American icon of architecture, who called it “one of the architectural



Four Masters

A HISTORICAL RECONSIDERATION OF AUTHORSHIP OF THE SALT LAKE TABERNACLE

masterpieces of the country and perhaps the world.”¹

Its reputation as a great building is firmly
established, but its authorship
remains a

controversy. Even before it was completed, disagree-
ments over who was to receive the credit for the build-
ing had begun. The four men that are commonly asso-
ciated with the design and construction of the building
are Brigham Young, William H. Folsom, Henry Grow,
and Truman O. Angell. Perhaps if these four could

have agreed on who was to be called the archi-

tect, it would not be such a mystery

today. . . . A careful examination of

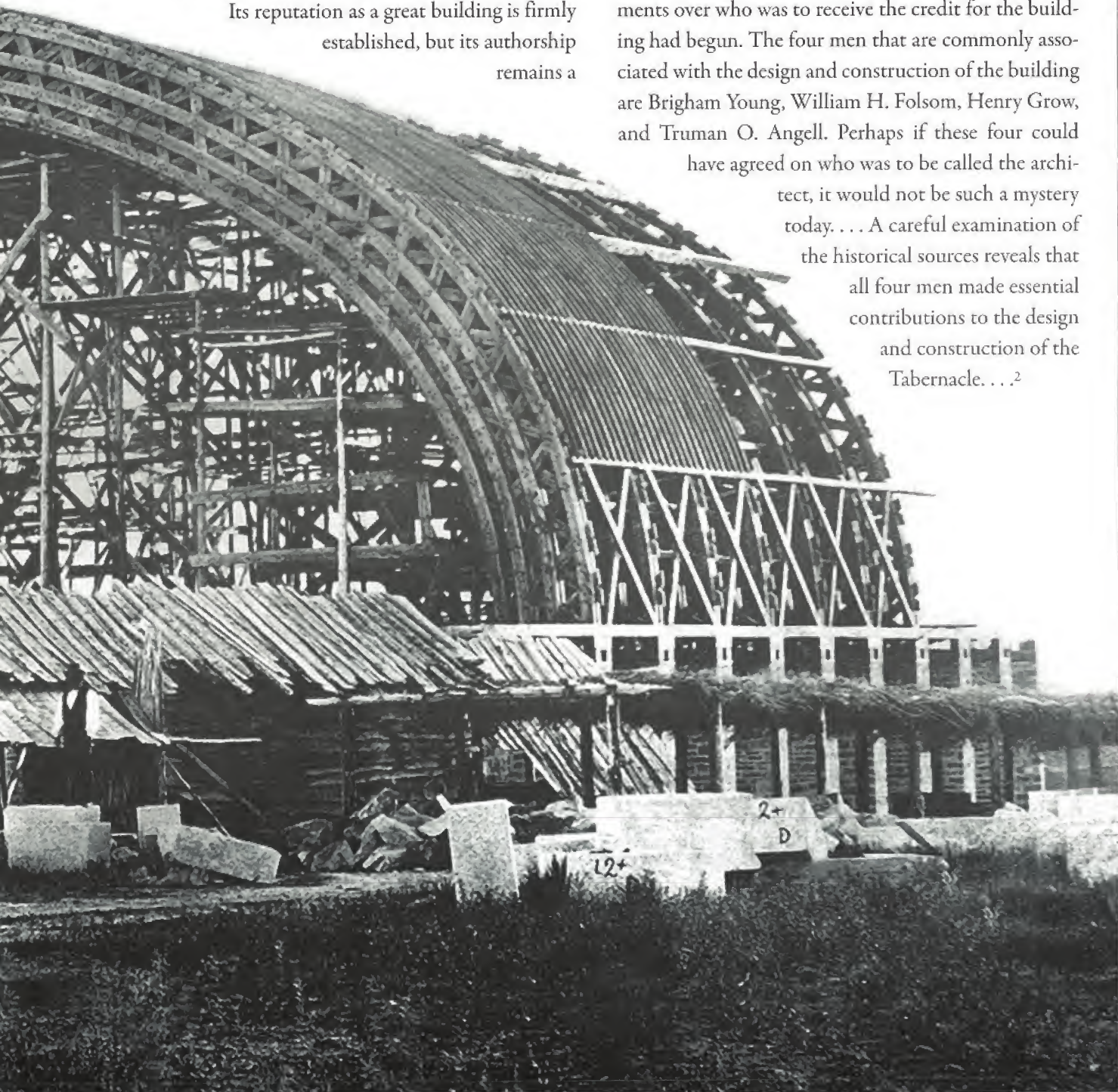
the historical sources reveals that

all four men made essential

contributions to the design

and construction of the

Tabernacle. . . .²



BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE PLANNING OF THE TABERNACLE

Since Brigham Young saw the need for such a building, conceived its basic shape, and oversaw construction, he should be recognized for contributing enormously to the Tabernacle. . . . At the time of construction, Young was the Prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the temporal and spiritual leader of the growing populace in Utah that he had helped to establish just fifteen years earlier. . . .

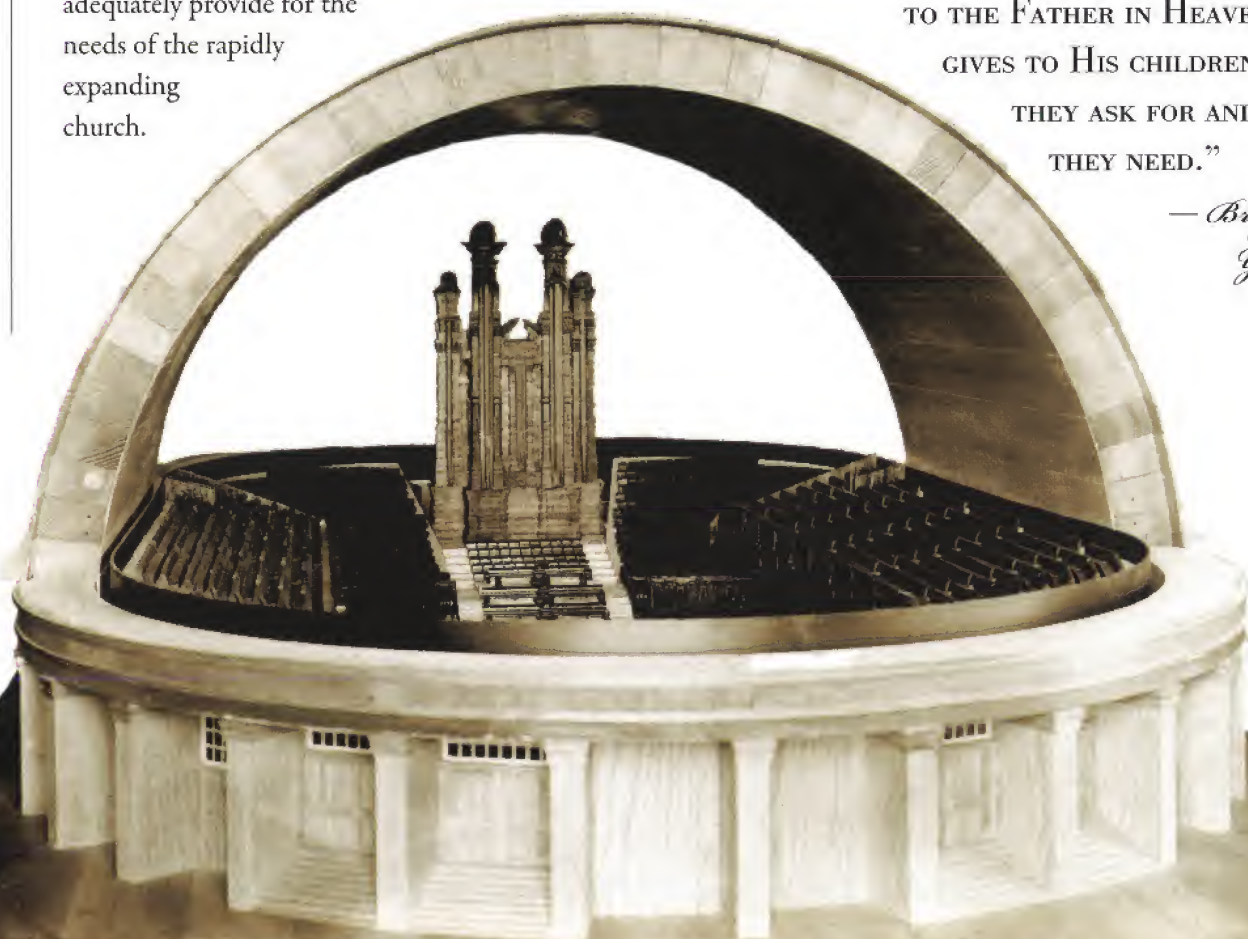
Though he probably built very few buildings himself, Young was involved in the planning of many important structures, including temples in Nauvoo, Illinois; St. George, Manti, Logan, and Salt Lake City, Utah. . . . The influence of his architectural taste is still observable in Utah today.

The Tabernacle was not the first building that Young had proposed for congregational meetings of the Utah Mormons. He had ordered the building of a series of four temporary boweries and the "Old Tabernacle," which all failed to adequately provide for the needs of the rapidly expanding church.

In the early to mid-1850s Young began to consider building a much bigger building, but he was limited by scarce resources. At the time, Salt Lake City was about a thousand miles from the nearest railroad track, there was little access to metal, and the closest trees were miles away. Young's decision to erect a building large enough to hold 10,000³ people may not seem so daunting by today's standards, but it required a leap of faith for that small community in the wilderness. No one else in Utah had the power or courage to propose such a large project and see it through to completion. The Tabernacle would have been impossible without Young's leadership. . . .

"WHO WAS THE ARCHITECT, THE DESIGNER OF
THE TABERNACLE AND THE TEMPLE? GOD IS
THE SUPREME ARCHITECT. WE OWE ALL OUR
INSPIRATION, OUR LOVE OF BEAUTY AND THE
KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS
TO THE FATHER IN HEAVEN WHO
GIVES TO HIS CHILDREN WHAT
THEY ASK FOR AND WHAT
THEY NEED."

— *Brigham
Young*⁴



[Brigham] came up with the basic shape of the [Tabernacle]. Many oral traditions have persisted concerning Young's inspiration for the idea. One source suggests that Young got the idea for its shape from an "umbrella, or turtle back, or half an egg."⁵ Another source claims that one of Young's daughters said that he got the idea from the small elliptical portion on the back of the old Tabernacle which resembled a band shell. . . .⁶ Most important, Young decided that the building should have a freestanding roof so that every person in attendance could have an unobstructed view of the speaker. This stipulation greatly influenced the design of the building.⁷

With a clear idea of what kind of building he wanted, Young consulted with William Folsom and Henry Grow. These two men translated Young's vision into a workable architectural plan. Though Young may not have designed any of the finer details of the building, he had a very active role in the planning. He likely examined and approved everything they did as well as the interior design later done by Truman Angell. A journal kept by Angell reveals that he showed Young all or most of the plans and drawings he made. Young made changes and suggestions which Angell implemented even when he may not have agreed with them.⁸

Young also aided in the construction of the Tabernacle by rallying members to help with construction. Workers on the Tabernacle were paid in tithing script, which they could use to buy goods that Church members had donated. However, their wages amounted to less than what they would have earned by working other jobs. There would not have been enough workers if Young had not urged people to work on the Tabernacle. . . .⁹

"The work from beginning to end has been closely supervised by President Young, who in this, as in everything else of public character, 'has been in all and through all' and encouraged by his confidence all engaged in it."¹⁰



WILLIAM FOLSOM AND THE EARLY STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION

Though Young had the leadership, the influence, and the faith to build the Tabernacle, he needed the help of a trained architect. No single person in Utah at the time had the experience and training to design something as impressive as the Tabernacle. William Folsom, "perhaps the most skilled designer of his generation in Utah," probably came the closest. . . .¹¹ He drew the only known plans of the greater structure of the building and he also supervised the beginning stages of construction. . . .

Folsom was put to work on many important projects such as the Salt Lake Theater, the Gardo House, and the ZCMI building. Folsom also advised in the design of the Salt Lake Temple and the construction of the St. George Temple for a time. But the work he is most well known for was his design of the Manti Temple. . . .¹²

Folsom became involved in the Tabernacle project when Young turned to him and Grow for help. . . . [Folsom] was serving as Church Architect at the time and as such he oversaw all the building projects of the Church. Folsom had been Church Architect since October 1861. . . . Under Young's direction, Folsom drew some preliminary plans,¹³ which were probably the only plans ever made of the greater portions of the building. . . .

At the General Conference of the Church in early April 1863,¹⁴ the Church's plan to build the new Tabernacle [was announced]. During the conference, talks by Church leaders, including Young, stressed the need for this building. The members of the Church were urged to give their time and energy to help build the Tabernacle. Women were even invited to "pull off [their] jewels, take [the] ornaments out of [their] hair, [their] earrings" and give them to the Church to help fund the Tabernacle. . . .¹⁵

On April 18, 1863, Folsom accompanied Jesse W.

Fox to the temple block to survey the land that would be used for the Tabernacle. Digging for the foundation began soon after. On June 3 an article in the *Deseret News* reported that the necessary digging was almost complete and also provided a description of what the building was to look like. The description was signed "William Folsom: Architect." The fact that Folsom provided this description and was designated by the paper as the architect is a feather in Folsom's cap. But there are discrepancies between Folsom's description and the actual building. . . .

It is probably safe to assume that the description published in the *Deseret News* was in accordance with the plans Folsom drew. At some point after June 3, 1863, the design was altered. . . . That Folsom's original design was changed does not make him any less an architect of the Tabernacle. Many aspects of his design remain in the building and he personally oversaw the building of the foundation and the pilasters.

On June 10 the *Deseret News* reported that the foundations of the piers were mostly in place and some of the columns were being raised. Folsom used sandstone from quarries in Red Butte Canyon to build the 44 columns around the perimeter of the building. When the columns were finished, construction slowed to a halt. The cornerstone was placed sometime in 1864, but after that hardly any progress was made until September 1865. . . . The delay was at least partly due to a growing conflict between the architects. Folsom supervised the initial stages of construction, but when work started again in September 1865, Grow was supervising the construction of the roof and perhaps construction in general. Young apparently replaced Folsom with Grow as construction supervisor.

In April 1867, Folsom's job as Church Architect was given back to Angell, but Folsom was retained as an assistant. Angell had resigned from this position in 1861 because he was too ill and frustrated with the job to continue. Some believe that Folsom asked to be



released as Church Architect for these same reasons. . . .¹⁶

Folsom likely had little influence on the construction of the Tabernacle after September 1865 and certainly nothing to do with the building after April 1867. Various entries in Angell's journal suggest that Folsom was elsewhere working on other projects through the spring and summer of 1867. . . .¹⁷

Folsom was indeed an architect of the Tabernacle because he had a great impact over the design and supervised the beginning stages of construction. . . .

HENRY GROW AND THE ROOF OF THE TABERNACLE

Folsom was the best equipped to draw the plans of the Tabernacle, but he was not the best equipped to design the huge freestanding roof. After Young conceived the idea for the Tabernacle, he also consulted with bridge builder Henry Grow. Young hoped that Grow could build a large self-supporting wooden roof over the Tabernacle using the same designs and techniques he used to build bridges. Grow should be recognized for contributing to the creation of the Tabernacle because he designed the roof and supervised construction from September 1865 until 1867. . . .

[Grow] was trained to build mills and bridges rather than buildings. . . . In 1842, he converted to the Church and moved to Nauvoo, arriving at about the same time as Folsom. Like Folsom, he worked on finishing the Nauvoo Temple and stayed behind after the majority of Church members had left. . . .

When President Young heard of Grow's experience in building bridges and mills, he called him to Salt Lake City and put him to work. For the next eleven years, Grow was constantly building something for the Church. He built a series of four sawmills in Big Cottonwood Canyon that were later used to saw wood for the Tabernacle. He also built bridges over the Weber



and Jordan rivers. . . . Though he worked on a few large buildings, such as the Salt Lake Theater that Folsom had designed, Grow had very little experience designing buildings, let alone one the size and complexity of the Tabernacle. Later in his life, he was made superintendent of all the buildings and carpentry work for the Church and contributed to the construction of the Salt Lake Temple. . . .¹⁸

Young consulted with Grow about the Tabernacle at about the same time he consulted with Folsom, but there is no way to know whom he consulted first.

The roof, [Grow's contribution to the] Tabernacle, was the biggest part of the construction. Over one million feet of lumber for the roof alone had to be cut and hauled down from the canyons to the construction site. Huge timbers were steamed

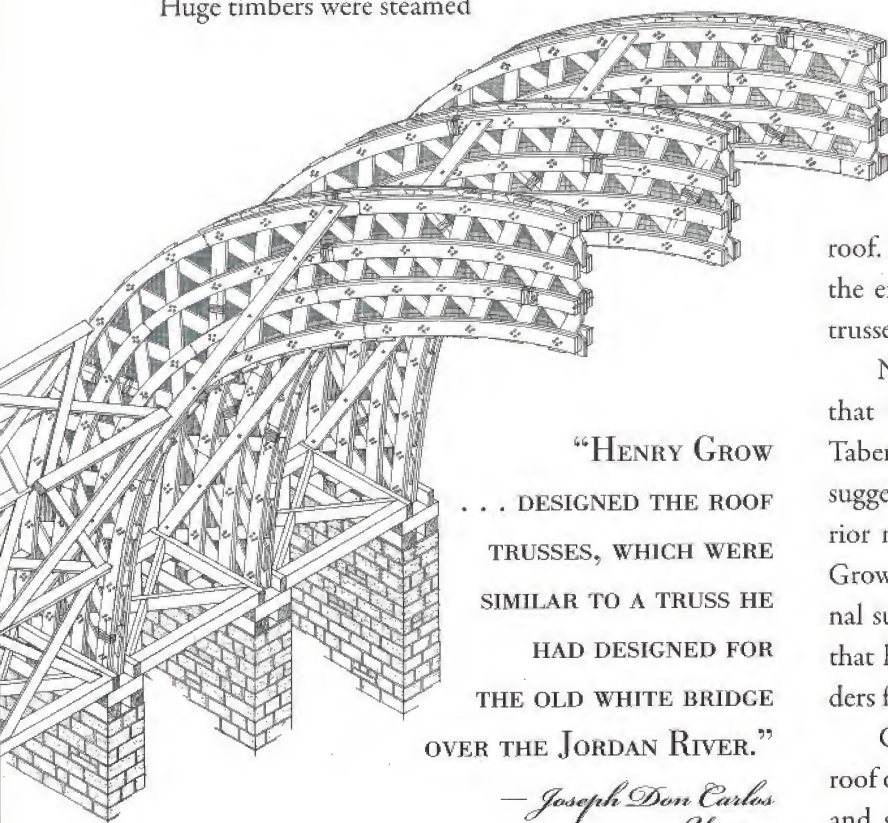


and weighted on each end to make them curve to the desired angle. Since there was a scarcity of nails, wooden pegs were used to tie the timbers together. The pegs were then split with wedges perpendicular to the grain of the timbers to make them more secure. Wherever the wood began to split, it was wrapped with rawhide which contracted as it dried. . . .

At the highest point, the ceiling is sixty-eight feet above the floor and there is a space of nine feet from the ceiling to the roof. Nine large lattice arches span the width of the building. In his bridges, Grow had to build only two of these lattice arches and connect them. The Tabernacle roof was more complex and required greater creativity than any bridge Grow had ever built. The most difficult portions to design were the semi-circular ends of the building. Grow spent many nights pacing the floor trying to figure out how he could build radial trusses around the semi-circular ends of the building and bring them to a true common joint. . . .¹⁹ Grow's design is especially impressive considering he drew no plans for the roof. In addition, he did not know how he would build the end sections before he started building the main trusses. . . .²⁰

Newspaper articles from 1866 and 1867 indicate that Grow was in charge of construction on the Tabernacle during these years. . . . But other evidence suggests that as construction of the roof and the exterior neared completion, Angell may have supplanted Grow as supervisor. Various references in Angell's journal suggest that he was in charge of construction and that he gave orders to Grow rather than receiving orders from him. . . .²¹

Clearly Grow had control over the design of the roof of the Tabernacle and over construction for a time and should therefore be recognized for his valuable contribution. The Tabernacle would be a very different structure without his help.



"HENRY GROW
... DESIGNED THE ROOF
TRUSSES, WHICH WERE
SIMILAR TO A TRUSS HE
HAD DESIGNED FOR
THE OLD WHITE BRIDGE
OVER THE JORDAN RIVER."

— Joseph Don Carlos
Young,

"Statement, November 12, 1934,"
LDS Church Archives, 1.

National Historic Landmark in 1970 and became the first building to be designated as a National Civil Engineering Landmark in 1971.³⁴ Until April 2000, the Church used the Tabernacle for General Conferences and still uses it today for concerts and other important civic events. [In 2007] the Church [finished] a major renovation of the Tabernacle in order to reinforce the sandstone pillars, secure the roof to the pillars and bolster the foundation bringing it up to date with modern earthquake codes.³⁵ ■

Excerpts taken from Nathan D. Grow, "One Masterpiece, Four Masters: Reconsidering the Authorship of the Salt Lake Tabernacle," *Journal of Mormon History* 31.3 (Fall 2005): 170–97.

Notes

1 As quoted in Richard L. Evans, Speech, *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, October 1967.

2 Kate Carter, in *The Great Mormon Tabernacle* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1967), 7, also concluded that all four men should share equally in credit for the Tabernacle.

3 This was the approximate "comfortable" seating capacity when the Tabernacle was completed although some contemporary estimates went as high as 15,000. Since the average person today is larger-framed than our pioneer counterparts, the estimated capacity today is about 6500. Ronald W. Walker, "The Salt Lake Tabernacle: A Glimpse of Early Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 31.3 (Fall 2005): 207–8.

4 Susa Young Gates, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 228.

5 "William H. Folsom and Salt Lake Tabernacle," unpublished manuscript with photograph, n.d., LDS Church Archives.

6 Stewart L. Grow, "A Historical Study of the Construction of the Salt Lake Tabernacle," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1947, 143.

7 S. Olani Durrant, interview by the author, October 18, 2002.

8 For example, see Truman O. Angell, "Journal, 1867–1868," LDS Church Archives, September 25, 1867.

9 *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), May 29, 1867.

10 *Salt Lake Telegraph*, October 6, 1867.

11 Paul L. Anderson, "William Harrison Folsom: Pioneer Architect," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1975): 241.

12 Ibid., 251–53.

13 Many sources agree that these plans were made, but their exact whereabouts are no longer known. There is also no way to know how detailed these plans were or how much they were used in the construction. Nina Folsom Moss, a granddaughter of William Folsom, wrote in her *History of William*

Harrison Folsom that the plans were left in Folsom's house when it was sold and were later burned.

14 From October 1867 until April 2000, general conferences were held in the Tabernacle. This particular conference in 1863 was held in the Old Tabernacle.

15 Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to Brigham Young, made this invitation. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854–86), 10:10. See also, Stewart L. Grow, *A Tabernacle in the Desert* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), 32.

16 Paul L. Anderson, "Truman O. Angell: Architect and Saint," in *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies center, 1985), 160.

17 Angell, "Journal, 1867–1868," May 3, 6 and 10, 1867.

18 Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (1920; reprint ed., Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 3:95–96.

19 Grow, *A Tabernacle in the Desert*, 41.

20 Grow, "A Historical Study," 155.

21 Angell, "Journal, 1867–1868," May 23, 28, and July 18, 1867.

22 Anderson, "Truman O. Angell," 137.

23 Truman O. Angell, "Autobiography," LDS Church Archives.

24 Most scholars consider Angell to be the architect of the Salt Lake Temple, but this is disputed in Charles Mark Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences on the Salt Lake Temple," M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1972, 89.

25 Angell, "Journal, 1867–1868," September 20, 1867.

26 Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences," 73.

27 *Salt Lake Telegraph* (Salt Lake City), October 6, 1867.

28 Truman O. Angell, "Drawings of the Salt Lake Tabernacle," LDS Church Archives.

29 Angell, "Journal, 1867–1868," July 18, 1867.

30 Carl W. Condit, "The Mormon Tabernacle," *Progressive Architecture* 47 (November 1966): 160.

31 "Improvements in the Tabernacle," *Deseret News Weekly*, April 9, 1884, 184.

32 "It Looks like New," *Deseret Evening News*, September 28, 1895, 8.

33 Walker, 213–14.

34 Rex E. Cooper, "Tabernacle, Salt Lake City," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1434.

35 Heather May, "Tabernacle Work Order: 'Be Careful,'" *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City), October 2, 2004.

Visuals in this issue:

Photos © from the Utah State Historical Society, used by permission, all rights reserved: *Classified Photograph Collection*, 921 *Biography*: John Taylor funeral #13916 (14); Henry Grow #12419 (29); Heber M. Wells #14097 (34); John F. Kennedy #26390 (36); Woodrow Wilson #14143 (36). *Shipler Commercial Photographers Collection*: Tabernacle

Interior (oval inset) #SL36 (2); During Conference #02095 (8); Conference Crowd #11725 (9); Celebration in the Tabernacle #01601 (17). *Collection #726.13*: Tabernacle organ #6458 (21); Tabernacle model #28475 (26). *Misc. Collections*: city scenes C-1248, Ed2, #9(2-3) and #12 (6-7); Early Tabernacle Choir photo (12-13); inaugural decorations (16); "Eisteddfod" program cover (18); and Tabernacle organ #6458 (21).

Recent renovation photo (1) and historical Tabernacle photos © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc: (4-5); engraving (5); (24-25); Folsom (28); and Angel (30).

Portrait on stone of Madame Anna Bishop by P. Kramer, 1849 (18); Sousa portrait, ca. 1900, courtesy Library of Congress (20); Paderewski portrait courtesy University of Southern California Polish Music Center (20); Eliot portrait, Harvard Medical Library Collections (22); Tabernacle interior © by John Telford (32); Grant portrait (34) Library of Congress.

Chapter Eternal

In loving memory of our SUP brothers who have recently joined their pioneer forebears on the other side of the veil. Pioneer rejoices in the lives of these good men and extends its sympathies and good wishes to families and loved ones.

Albert Adams, *Cedar City*
Robert M. Arbuckle, *Centerville*
Clayton Baird, *Settlement Canyon*
Eugene Bott,

At Large Life Member
Merrill Croft, *Sugarhouse*
Luan H. Ferrin, *Ogden*
Sterling Eugene Gardner, *Ogden*
Brent Gibson, *Hurricane Valley*
Angus Hales, *Palmyra Life Member*
Daniel Hess, *USRV*
Eric Hogan, *Centerville*
Clive B. Jolley,

At Large Life Member
Wendell H. Jones,
At Large Life Member

Laurel Durrant Leavitt, *Mesa*
Kent Lindsey, *Centerville*
M. Dell Madsen, *Salt Lake City*
Frank Matheson,

Pioneer Heritage Life Member
Ivo D. Mills, *Centerville*
Gordon B. Pace,
At Large Life Member
John L. Sherrow, *Murray*
Ervin M. Skousen,
At Large Life Member
Carl Eugene Standage, *Mesa*
Duaine Trowbridge,
Olympus Hills
Robert G. Vernon,
Salt Lake City Life Member

SUP New Members

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Michael T. Dupree
Randy Saunders
Beehive
Joel C. Jensen
Bountiful
Paul D. Taylor
Wayne M. Wagstaff
S. Donald West
Box Elder
George R. Knavel
Veran Smith
Brigham Young
Lynn G. Hillstead
Richard B. Hodson
Buena Ventura
Lester B. Morton
Bob Wall
Boyd Whitesides
E. Maynard Whitesides
Cedar City
Lane Lamoreaux
Howard Waters
Centerville
Royce Allen
Sterling Dale Murray
Cotton Mission
Edwin C. Bolton
R. Allen Hackworth
Robert Paxton
Hole-in-the-Rock
Dan Alberts
Reed A. Monson

Hurricane Valley

Albert Fawcett
Jerry Glazier
Las Vegas
Martin J. Rebentisch
Travis K. Roundy

Lehi

Lenard A. Wing
Little Salt Lake
Stan Johnson

Maple Mountain

Don L. Liddiard
Max Wright Seamons
Mills

E. Farnes Bernsten
Hal E. Hansen

Morgan

Wilden Lee Dickson
Don Burt Heninger
Heber Mower

Mountain Valley

David O. Davies
Gerald Willard Day
Scott Holbrook
Wayne W. Probst

Ogden Pioneer

James H. Gaskill
Gary Ward Turner

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Ralph Hitchcock
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Lester W.B. Moore
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Jerald H. Bennion
Stephen W. Clark
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Jack Monson Jensen

Michael W. Reed

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Salt Lake Pioneer

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Settlement Canyon

Richard Kroft

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Sevier Valley

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Wendell W. Prows

Sugarhouse

Kent Berg
Lael Carter

Gordon Evans

Richard Merrell

Robert Pearson

Bruce Winters

Temple Fork

Ronald John Hanks
Alma Porter Moser

NEW CHAPTER

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Wayne Erickson

Carl Ingersoll

Rodney T. John

Larry Powell

Robert D. Rands

Kent Reese

Seymour Kenneth Robbins Jr.

Ron Saunders

Ray A. Sparks

Corry Tanner

Douglas West

Twenty Wells

Dave A. Reed

Upper Snake River Valley

Ben Lindsay

New Life Members

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Stephen H. Biesinger, *Squaw Peak*

Robert H. De Boer, *Ogden Pioneer*

Philip M. Harmon,

Upper Snake River Valley

Lyle Larsen, *Sevier Valley*

Daniel McArthur, *Cotton Mission*

Reed Mellor, *Lehi*

Alan R. Morgan, *Squaw Peak*

Clive Jay Romney, *Canyon Rim*

Randall Cooley Smith, *At Large*

Jimmy T. Snarr, *At Large*

William S. Snarr, *Mesa*

Kenneth L. Staley, *Cotton Mission*

LaRon Taylor, *Mt. Nebo*

Gordon Topham, *Sevier Valley*

Gary Mitchell Turnbull, *Bountiful*

C. Ronald VanLeuven, *Lehi*

Douglas Winters, *Las Vegas*

David Pearson Wright, PhD., *At Large*

U.S. PRESIDENTS

THE TABERNACLE



— *Ulysses S. Grant*

From the very early 1900s many Presidents of the United States visited the Great Tabernacle and several major presidential addresses originated there. Presidential candidates who either visited or spoke in the Tabernacle include James G. Blaine (1884), William Jennings Bryan (1896, 1900, and 1908), Alfred Landon (1936), Wendell Wilkie (1940), Thomas E. Dewey (1944 and 1948), Adlai Stevenson (1952 and 1956) and Barry Goldwater (1964).¹

Soon after the Tabernacle was complete, President Ulysses S. Grant visited the Tabernacle in October, 1875.² Theodore Roosevelt spoke in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on May 29, 1903. He talked about the federal government's intent to aid and support the development of irrigation in the Rocky Mountain and plains states. He paid homage to the pioneers for their part in developing irrigation as a vital part of colonizing the West. Stating that "irrigation was first practiced on a large scale in this State [Utah]. The necessity of the pioneers here led to the development of irrigation to a degree absolutely unknown before on this continent."³

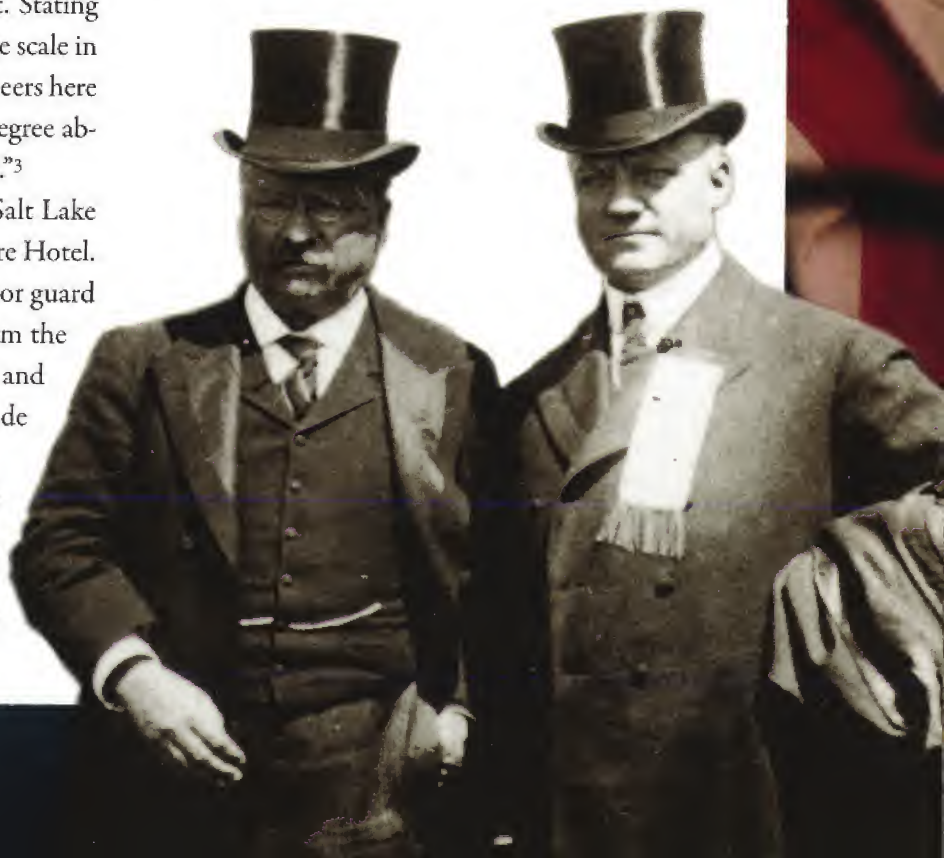
When William Howard Taft visited Salt Lake City in 1909 he stayed at the Temple Square Hotel. A group of ROTC cadets provided an honor guard for his visit and escorted the president from the Rio Grande Railroad Station to the hotel and again the next day when President Taft rode in a horse-drawn carriage.⁴

Woodrow Wilson came to Salt Lake

City on September 23, 1919, as part of his proposed nearly 10,000 mile trip to take his fight for the League of Nations to the people. President and Mrs. Wilson rested in their hotel prior to his speech scheduled for 8:00 p.m. in the

Tabernacle. At 6:00 p.m. Wilson's secretary came to the hotel room door and told the president that the Tabernacle was so packed that the police had locked the doors. The size of the crowd inside was reported to be 15,000 people. The crowds outside were so numerous that a police escort had difficulty in clearing the way for the Wilsons to proceed to the Tabernacle.

The heat and "fetid" air in the Tabernacle made the first lady feel "sick and blind," and it was even worse on the rostrum, where she thought she was going to faint. Her maid passed her a bottle of smelling salts, which she gratefully used, and then poured some in her handkerchief and passed it to



President Theodore Roosevelt with Heber M. Wells who served as the first governor of the State of Utah, 1896-1905.

the president. The president was in agony from a pain in his head and "choking from the asthma and the poor air." After returning to their hotel, the president required a change of clothes because he was wet through from perspiration.⁵ Wilson's speaking tour was cut short when he suffered a disabling stroke in Colorado during the next month after his Utah visit.

In 1923 President Warren Harding visited Utah as part of a western tour to "bring him closer to the people and their conditions."⁶ The visit to Salt Lake City on June 26, 1923, included a speech at Liberty Park, a reception at Hotel Utah, and a round of golf with Mormon church president Heber J. Grant as his golfing partner. He received a 21-gun salute at Fort Douglas, followed by a private organ recital at the Mormon Tabernacle. That evening the president returned to the Tabernacle, where he delivered a speech on the subject of "Taxation and Expenditure" to an overflow crowd. Unfortunately, the western tour ended abruptly just five weeks after the visit to Salt Lake City when President Harding suddenly became ill and died in San Francisco on August 2, 1923.⁷

Herbert Hoover gave a major address in the Tabernacle on November 7, 1932. This was just one day before the presidential election of 1932 when Hoover lost by a landslide to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The country was in the depths of the Great Depression, and the speech was a long one in which he defended his administration's policies with regard to the Depression.⁸ Hoover mentioned that as a young man one of his first professional responsibilities was as a surveyor on a ditch line in Utah.

President Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of War was George Dern, who had served as governor of Utah from 1925 to 1933. Dern died in 1936 and FDR, along with eight cabinet members, attended Governor Dern's funeral services, which were held in the Tabernacle.⁹

Harry S Truman gave an address in the Tabernacle on September 21, 1948, during the presidential election campaign. Truman mentioned he had been received cordially by the president of the Mormon church (George Albert Smith). He related this event to a little bit of family history—Truman's grandfather had been cordially



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received by Brigham Young. The grandfather, who lived in Jackson County, Mo., was a freighter across the plains and occasionally brought an ox train load of goods and merchandise to Salt Lake City. The grandfather, whose name was also Young, went to see Brigham Young and told him his troubles. Brigham Young told him to rent space on Main Street in Salt Lake City, place his goods on display, and guaranteed that he would lose no money. And, according to Truman, he didn't.¹⁰

John F. Kennedy spoke in the Tabernacle on September 26, 1963. The Tabernacle Choir was present and gave a stirring rendition of "America, the Beautiful", after which President Kennedy delivered his first major address for the following year's presidential campaign. After a minute long ovation from the audience, the Choir performed "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which is now one of the signature pieces of the choir. This writer was present at that speech as a Tabernacle usher. A little less than two months after this, JFK was dead of an assassin's bullet in Dallas.

Lyndon Johnson's speech in the Tabernacle on October 29, 1964, was "deeply moving and very meaningful" as he referred to the fact that his predecessor had stood in the same spot a "year ago last month."

Richard M. Nixon spoke in the Tabernacle as a presidential candidate during the campaign of 1968. He was in Utah on Pioneer Day, July 24, 1970, and gave remarks in the Church Office Building. He referred back

President Woodrow Wilson at the Utah State Capitol.



John F. Kennedy in the Tabernacle September 26, 1963.

to his visit to the Tabernacle and remembered that the Tabernacle Choir had been there and had sung "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Nixon was with George Romney in the Tabernacle and told Romney he "had never heard it better." Later, Nixon had the Choir at the inauguration.¹¹

In later years it appears the Tabernacle has not been the site of presidential speeches. Most news reports mention that when a president or a presidential candidate has been in Salt Lake City, they have been received in the offices of the First Presidency of the Church, and major speeches are given in another venue. For example, George W. Bush visited Salt Lake City on September 1, 2006, and gave a speech at an American Legion convention in the Salt Palace Convention Center. ▀

Notes

1 Robert C. Mitchell, "Desert Tortoise: The Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35.4 (Fall 1967): 279-91.

2 The Walker House Guest Register (1875), www.lib.utah.edu/spc/mss/accn1616/accn1616.html

3 Theodore Roosevelt Centennial CD Rom.

4 Biographical sketch of George Y. Yasuda, <http://db3-sql.staff.library.utah.edu/lucene/Photo/P1100/P1198.xml/complete>.

5 Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Morrow, 1964).

6 W. Paul Reeve, History Blazer July 1995.

http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/from_war_to_war/presidenthardings1923visittoutah.html

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8 John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database). Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=23340>.

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10 Woolley and Peters.

11 Ibid.

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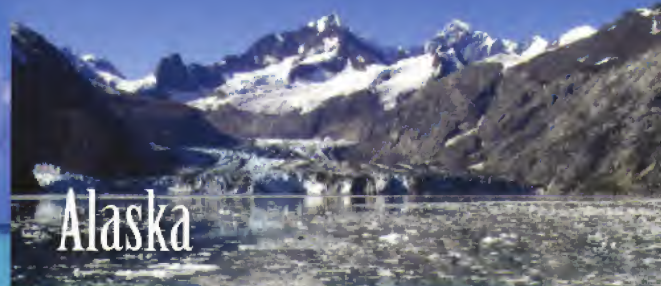
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